

## 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments

### Background

Source water protection has become a national priority with the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWAA). The SDWAA created a source water assessment program, provided funding for source water activities through a drinking water loan fund, and reauthorized the existing wellhead protection program. These new tools and resources can be maximized to develop state & local source water protection programs.

### What is source water?

Source water is the groundwater (water found under ground) or surface water (lake, river, stream) that is used for drinking water by a public water system.

### What is source water protection?

Simply, it is preventing the pollution of the lakes, rivers, streams, and ground water that serve as sources of drinking water.

### Why protect sources of drinking water?

Source water protection can be a cost-effective strategy for ensuring safe drinking water supplies. Contaminated source water supplies can increase treatment and monitoring expenses or require development of a new drinking water supply to replace the contaminated source. This is expensive and can delay the ability to provide safe, affordable water.

## Funding through the SRF

The SDWAA authorized a new drinking water State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF). States may use their SRF to assist the PWS by financing infrastructure improvements needed to protect public health. States may also set aside portions of their SRF for the following source water activities:

- Up to 10% for a state to administer or provide technical assistance for source water protection programs.
- Up to an additional 2% for assistance for small public water systems (PWS).
- An additional total of up to 15% for the following (each individual activity listed below cannot receive more than 10%):
  - source water assessment\*
  - voluntary protection efforts and source water petition program
  - loans to PWS for land purchase and conservation easements
  - establish and implement a wellhead protection program.

### \*Source water assessment funding

Funding for the assessment program is available to States **only from the 1997** allotment and must be spent in four years. States are encouraged to review their assessment requirements (see inside) and to reserve as much of the 10% as needed to develop a successful protection program.

## US Environmental Protection Agency

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A Summary of the  
**SOURCE WATER  
PROVISIONS**  
of the 1996  
Safe Drinking Water Act  
Amendments

**For More Information and Stakeholder Meeting**

**Dates/Locations contact the  
SDWA Hotline 1-800-426-4791**

## Source Water Assessment Program

States with public drinking water system (PWS) primacy are required to submit source water assessment programs (SWAP) to U.S. EPA for approval. As part of a SWAP, States are required to:

- 1) delineate the boundaries of the areas providing source waters for PWS and,
- 2) identify (to the extent practicable) the origins of regulated and certain unregulated contaminants in the delineated area to determine the susceptibility (vulnerability) of the PWS to such contaminants.

## Linkages to Existing Programs

There are existing State and Federal programs which may already fulfill SWAP requirements. Examples may include delineations and assessments completed under the Wellhead Protection Program; sanitary surveys, vulnerability assessments, and monitoring programs under the PWS program; State Pesticide Management Plans; programs or plans pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act; watershed initiatives; Comprehensive State Ground Water Protection Programs; and others. With careful planning, the delineations and assessments completed for the SWAP may complement options listed for future rules such as the Ground Water Disinfection Rule.

## National SWAP Guidance Issues

In response to the short time frames (see right panel) the U.S. EPA is concentrating on developing Federal guidance for the source water assessment program and in assisting States in developing their source water assessment and protection programs.

The U.S. EPA is interested in obtaining input from Stakeholders on how a source water assessment program should be framed. Several key questions have been listed below for your consideration. In addition, please see the *Discussion Guide for State Source Water Assessment and Protection Programs*, 12/27/96. A copy may be obtained through the SDWA Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

- Are the delineations and assessments developed under an approved U.S.EPA wellhead protection program adequate for ground water sources?
- What constitutes an adequate delineation and assessment for surface water sources?
- What should be the scope and extent of the vulnerability assessments?
- How can the SWAP efforts build on existing State and local efforts?
- States must make the SWAP information available to the public. How should this be achieved?
- To whom can a State delegate the program?
- How should the SRF set-asides be used?

## U.S. EPA Contacts

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## Time Frame for SWAP

